4 February 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Staff Meeting Minutes of 1 February 1980

25X1

The Director introduced Bob Gates and announced he would be replacing [redacted] as EA/DCI, effective 1 March 1980. [redacted] 25X1

McMahon highlighted reports as follows:

--Libyan ships are picking up uranium in Nigeria and delivering it to Pakistan. The Director asked that if we publish on this report it not be carried in the NID. [redacted] 25X1

-- [redacted] the Soviets have moved some troops into the PDRY. [redacted] 25X1 25X1

-- [redacted] 25X1

--Advice from Buenos Aires that Gen. Goodpaster's mission there was not as successful as previously reported. The Argentine Government's position on limiting grain sales to the Soviets will await their review of State's report on human rights. [redacted] 25X1

--Venezuela's relations with Cuba are indeed strained, e.g., they have talked to the Swiss about handling their affairs in the event of a break in relations. [redacted] 25X1

Lipton reported that Mr. Carlucci's session before the Burlison Subcommittee yesterday went extremely well, resulting in a [redacted] 25X1
Reserve replenishment. Later in the meeting Dirks noted that [redacted] 25X1
reprogramming had been approved. [redacted] 25X1

The Director endorsed [redacted] view that Mr. Carlucci was most 25X1
effective on last evening's MacNeil-Lehrer program with Senators
Huddleston and Wallop re Charter Legislation. [redacted] 25X1

25X1

[redacted]

Clarke noted word received from David Aaron that the PDB had greatly improved over the past six months. The Director welcomed this, and Clarke asked McMahon to continue to provide as much of his significant reporting as possible. McMahon agreed to. [redacted] 25X1

Hitz said he had advised Senator Glenn that it was probable a member of his staff had leaked information we provided on the South African nuclear event (see attached Washington Post article). The Senator will look into it. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] 25X1

Dirks said he was forwarding a memo expressing concern with Title VI (NSA) draft Charter Legislation. He highlighted provisions which adversely impact on our equities. Wortman and McMahon also expressed their considerable concern. In response to the Director's question, it was noted that an issues paper is due to David Aaron 4 February. The Director indicated he would support forwarding our reservations but said there seems to be no excuse for our not having done so earlier. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] noted that an SR-71 mission over Cuba is now set for 2 February, subject to weather (cloud-free) conditions. The Director advised that an SCC decision had been made to fly 3 February, if the 2 February mission canceled, irrespective of the weather. Zellmer said he would convey these instructions. [redacted] 25X1 25X1 25X1

[redacted] 25X1

B. C. Evans

Attachments: (2)

ARTICLE APPEARED ON PAGE 1

THE WASHINGTON POST
30 January 1980

New Light Cast on Sky-Flash Mystery

By Thomas O'Toole
Washington Post Staff Writer

On the night of Sept. 22, when nuclear scientists believe an atomic explosion went off in the skies south of the Cape of Good Hope, a task force of South African warships was conducting a secret exercise at sea.

The precise location of the sea-based exercise is unknown, but the Central Intelligence Agency has told a few select committees of the House and Senate that the exercise was held at roughly the same latitude and longitude where the explosion appeared to take place in the atmosphere.

"That's one of the main pieces of evidence we've heard so far for this mystery explosion," confided one congressional aide briefed by the CIA. "That suggests that the source of the explosion could have been a rocket launched from one of those South African ships."

The CIA passed on another piece of information to Congress about the suspected Sept. 22 explosion. That same night, scientists peering into space with the world's largest radio telescope witnessed a ripple moving through the ionosphere in the skies over Puerto Rico a few hours after a Vela satellite saw a double flash of light in the southern hemisphere some 4,000 miles away.

"There were some questions raised about this ripple, but it appeared to be coming from the right direction and at the right velocity to have been caused by a nuclear explosion near South Africa," another congressional aide said. "If not, the ripple in the ionosphere is an awfully strange coincidence."

Ever since the State Department first announced the suspected nuclear explosion four months ago, the Carter administration has tried to discount it with explanations that seem to some scientists to depend heavily on coincidence.

A panel of outside scientists convened by the White House Office of Science and Technology first said that what the Vela satellite saw could have been a superbolt of lightning or a freak strike of lightning at the same time a meteor began to burn up in the atmosphere.

The panel has since discounted those explanations, suggesing instead that the satellite could have malfunctioned or seen a double glint of sunlight off another satellite or a descending meteor. The panel's final report is due to be made public next week and is understood to reach no conclusions.

Meanwhile, evidence is piling up on the side of a man-made nuclear explosion. Besides disclosing the presence of a South African naval task force and a ripple in the ionosphere the night of Sept. 22, the CIA is telling Congress that two sensors instead of one aboard the Vela satellite detected the double light flash charateristic of a nuclear event.

For weeks, Congress and the public have been told that an optical sensor called a "bhangmeter" on the Vela satellite picked up the double light-pulse of a nuclear explosion in the skies near South Africa at 3 a.m. Sept. 22.

The double flash was described at Los Alamos Scientific Labratory as the "unmistakable" signature of an atomic explosion: a fireball blacked out for an instant by the shock wave surrounding the explosion, then reappearing 99 times more instense as the shock wave dissipates.

It turns out that there are two "bhangmeters" on the Vela satellite, one very sensitive instrument to spot the fireballs of small nuclear explosions and one not-so-sensitive to make sure large atomic blasts don't drown out the first instrument with their light.

"Both bhangmeters saw the double-flash the night of Sept. 22," a congressional aide said. "This kind of rules out any mistake by one of the instruments."

The best corroborating evidence for an explosion is the sighting the same night by the radio observatory at Arecibo in Puerto Rico of a ripple in the ionosphere, suggesting that a shock wave had moved through the skies and displaced the electrons in at least one layer of the ionosphere as it moved along.

In calculating the velocity of such a shock wave, scientists figured that a shock wave starting about 4,000 miles away in the southern skies near South Africa at 3 a.m. Sept. 22 would have arrived in the skies over Puerto Rico about the same time they saw the ripple in the ionosphere.

Scientists on the White House panel have challenged those calculations. Scientists making the calculations insist they are correct. The White House is having them checked by another independent group of scientists.

Meanwhile, no radioactive debris has turned up in southern hemisphere rainwater to confirm that an explosion took place. This doesn't surprise scientists at Los Alamos, who remember not being able to find fallout from planned U.S. explosions, and who point out that it took the United States as long as three weeks to sample the rainwater in the southern hemisphere after the suspected explosion last year.

Although the CIA cannot confirm an explosion, it has told Congress that if there was an explosion it suspects South Africa of having set it off. The CIA also mentions Israel as a suspect and rules out Pakistan and India. The mystery of Sept. 22 is still a mystery.

ON PAGE A1-4
THE WASHINGTON POST
31 January 1980

Intelligence Estimate Said To Show Need for SALT

By Michael Getler
and Robert G. Kaiser
Washington Post Staff Writers

The nation's top intelligence officials this week are completing a grim new estimate predicting that without a Soviet-American strategic arms agreement, Soviet rockets in 1989 will be able to rain nearly 250 percent more atomic warheads on the United States than they would if constrained by SALT II and successor agreements.

The new National Intelligence Estimate—NIE 1138-79—indicates that by 1989, the Soviet could have about 14,000 highly accurate warheads mounted on their land-based missile force aimed at the United States. Under current plans, the United States would have only a fraction of this amount. By U.S. estimates, the Soviets would have about 6,000 such warheads under a SALT II treaty, which would expire in 1985 but could be extended.

These still-secret figures are the first concrete contribution to an emergency debate within the government about one consequence of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and subsequent derailing of SALT II, that has received scant public attention thus far.

This debate is prompted by the widely pereived conclusion that the United States is in danger of entering into a tense period of confrontation with the Soviet Union without a coherent or broadly supported policy of dealing with nuclear weapons.

The administration hoped it had such a policy built around the SALT II treaty and a program of new strategic arms procurement that went with it. Even before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, this policy—like the treaty—was in serious trouble, but now it appears to be on the verge of unraveling.

Senior administration officials now see a dangerous paradox—that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, potentially a threat to U.S. security, has prevented passage of a Soviet-American arms agreement that they believe clearly serves the country's security interests.

For these officials, the new National Intelligence Estimate provides proof that SALT II would put crucial constraints on a Soviet missile buildup that otherwise could threaten the survivability of the U.S. retaliatory missile force.

Several officials in the White House, Pentagon and State Department said in interviews in recent days that the prospect of a world without SALT—so starkly defined by the new N.I.E.—could jolt the country and the Senate into the realization that SALT II is now more urgent than ever.

But other administration officials and numerous sources on Capitol Hill expressed the belief that the Senate could never be convinced to act favorably on SALT II this year while Soviet-American relations are tense.

While the intelligence estimate is normally classified, some government officials who support SALT are willing to discuss the broad figures privately, believing they support the case for the treaty.

SALT critics in the Senate and elsewhere reject alarmist views of the world without SALT, arguing that the Soviets will not reach the high numbers of warheads predicted in the N.I.E. because they will not need them.

By extending the new intelligence estimate out to 1989, the intelligence officials throughout the government who prepare National Intelligence Estimates for the president cover the period in which the new U.S. super-missile, the MX, is supposed to be fully deployed.

The United States is currently planning to build 200 of these huge missiles, each carrying 10 warheads. The idea is to truck them around concrete "racetracks" in desert valleys of Utah and Nevada, hiding them at random in 4,600 concrete shelters as protection against a Soviet strike. The system is estimated to cost between $30 billion and $100 billion.

But the arcane arithmetic of nuclear forces that drives the arms race could change dramatically without SALT limits in force, raising questions about whether this MX project—a scheme of unprecedented cost and complexity—is the right answer.

Under SALT, government specialists estimate the Soviets could possibly aim 3,000 warheads at the MX silos, with the rest of their arsenal aimed at other U.S. missiles and military and civilian targets. About half the MX force would survive a Soviet attack, they believe, enough to still deter a Soviet strike in the first place.

But with 14,000 Soviet warheads, some 11,000 could be aimed at the MX silos, almost quadrupling the threat and calling the whole MX project, as now conceived, into question.

To maintain survival of half the MX force under an uncontrolled Soviet expansion, specialists say that the first crude estimates undertaken indicate it could mean tripling the land needed in Utah and Nevada to handle still more silos and double the cost.

It is this kind of calculation that some top civilian officials believe will have what one called "a profound and sobering impact on people's perceptions of what the realities of a world without SALT will mean."

The idea of building a budget-busting MX that might not even fulfill its mission is certain to reopen old arguments and start new one on American procurement policy.

For example, some members of Congress and administration officials are already talking privately about reviving earlier ideas for missiles that can be carried aloft and fired from airplanes. Other ideas are to move toward a new class of less expensive, more accurate missile-carrying submarines, or even to go back to the idea of installing anti-ballistic missile (ABM) defenses around existing missile silos to protect against attack. ABM's are banned by the SALT I treaty, so reverting to them would amount to "the death of arms controls," one official said.

For now President Carter has declared a policy of respecting the limits on arms contained in both the SALT I and II agreements. The Soviets' willingness to do the same, when the SALT I agreement on offensive weapons has lapsed and the SALT II treaty has not been ratified, will be tested this spring.

To continue respecting the SALT I limits, the Soviets will probably have

CONTINUED

spring that [redacted] are dismantling some of their old [redacted]akee-class submarines to make room under the numerical limits for a new Delta sub to be launched in May. The Soviets did so report in December, signaling a willingness then (before Afghanistan) to keep respecting lapsed provisions of SALT I.

Continued, voluntary adherence to the existing agreements will also require American cooperation, including sanction from Congress. The first test could come in July, when a new Trident submarine goes to sea and older Polaris subs must come out of the American fleet to satisfy SALT II. The Navy is willing to do this because the Polaris boats are antiquated, but Congress will have to vote money to decommission those boats, an issue that could provoke a de facto vote on SALT in both houses.

SALT opponents on the Hill are already planning tactics to scuttle the existing agreements, if not on this issue then on one of many others that will come up for votes this year.

Even if both sides chose to respect the SALT agreements voluntarily, practical problems in the months ahead will make this increasingly difficult.

For example, if there is no Senate action on SALT II this year, the treaty cannot come up for a vote before mid-1981. But it was drafted on the assumption that the Soviets would have all of 1980 and 1981 to dismantle 250 old rockets that they would have to give up under the treaty. This timetable, then, would have to be renegotiated, a perilous necessity given the delicate balancing of interests embodied in the treaty now

which the Soviet [redacted] great emphasis, is scheduled to [redacted]ire at the end of 1981. U.S. officials have begun to wonder if Moscow would accept SALT II next year without a prolonged protocol, since this section provides the most significant controls in SALT II on the new type of U.S. strategic weapon, cruise missiles.

The cruise missile issue has been made more complicated by the decision of NATO nations in December to deploy large numbers of these unmanned, uncannily accurate drones in Europe aimed at Soviet targets. U.S. officials acknowledge that the Soviets now face a greater potential cruise missile threat than they probably anticipated when they signed SALT II last June.

Some officials expect the Soviets to demand reopening the negotiations to extend the cruise missile controls. But this could open SALT's Pandora's Box—the issues of all European-based nuclear weapons, which were deliberately left out of SALT II except for the short-lived cruise missile controls in its protocol.

Once the European-based systems—including the French and British nuclear forces—become a SALT issue, many experts agree, it will become vastly more difficult to negotiate any agreements.

Administration officials express deep pessimism about the prospects for building a political consensus behind new strategic arms policy if the SALT process does indeed collapse.

"We really are in a tricky world and a fragile situation now," one senior administration official said. "Nobody is prepared for the no-SALT world, either psychologically or militarily."

STRATEGIC WEAPONS

(as of Jan. 1, 1980)

	U.S.	RUSSIA
LAND ICBMs	1,054	1,398
SUBMARINE MISSILES	656	950
BOMBERS	348	156
NUCLEAR WARHEADS	9,200	6,000

Source: Defense Department